

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 USUN N 02025 01 OF 02 190040Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----024210 190046Z /65

O 190037Z MAY 78
FM USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1446
INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 USUN NEW YORK 02025

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MOPS, PINS, CG
SUBJECT: KOLWEZI EVACUATION: UN ASPECT

REF: STATE 126064

1. IN ACCORDANCE WITH INSTRUCTIONS REFTEL, AMBASSADOR LEONARD ASKED BELGIAN PERM REP ERNEMANN TO ARRANGE A MEETING WITH FRENCH AND BRITISH AMBASSADORS TO DISCUSS UN ASPECT OF KOLWEZI EVACUATION. MEETING TOOK PLACE AT BELGIAN MISSION PM MAY 18. AMBASSADOR LEONARD OPENED DISCUSSION BY EXPRESSING OUT CONCERN THAT IT BE CLEAR WHEN EVACUATION TAKES PLACE THAT WESTERN ACTIONS IN EVACUTION HAD BEEN REQUESTED BY GOVERNMENT OF ZAIRE. LEONARD SUGGESTED THAT ZAIRIAN MISSION BE ENCOURAGED TO SEND LETTER (ALONG LINES REFTEL) TO UN SECURITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT AND ALSO ADVISED THAT IT WOULD BE BENEFICIAL TO GIVE ADVANCE NOTICE OF EVACUATION TO CANADIANS, GERMANS, CERTAIN AFRICANS AND OTHER ALLIES.

2. ERNEMANN THEN ASKED IF HE COULD PROVIDE US
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WITH THE LATEST FACTS:

(A) AT 0930 HOURS GMT MAY 18 SEVEN AIRPLANES CARRYING 1750 PARATROOPERS LEFT BRUSSELS FOR THE IVORY COAST AND THEN A LOCATION IN ZAIRE. (HE LATER RELUCTANTLY REVEALED THE DESTINATION TO BE KAMINA AND REQUESTED THAT DESTINATION BE HELD IN STRICTEST

CONFIDENCE.)

(B) THE PLANES ARE EXPECTED TO LAND IN KAMINA AT APPROXIMATELY 0600 HOURS LOCAL TIME FRIDAY, MAY 19.

(C) UNTIL AFTER THEIR LANDING, NO DECISION WOULD BE TAKEN AS TO WHAT FURTHER ACTION, IF ANY, THOSE TROOPS WOULD TAKE. ONE VERY IMPORTANT FACTOR WOULD BE THE STATUS OF THE AIRPORT AT KOLWEZI.

(D) IN ANY CASE, NO OPERATION TOWARD KOLWEZI WOULD BE LAUNCHED BEFORE SATURDAY, MAY 20.

3. ERNEMANN DISPLAYED HIS GOVERNMENT'S APPARENTLY EXTREME NERVOUSNESS OVER THE OPERATION, ESPECIALLY OVER THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE TROOPS MIGHT HAVE TO FIGHT TO SECURE A STAGING AREA FOR THE EVACUATION. HE WAS DISTURBED BY FACT THAT PRESS HAD ALREADY GOTTEN WIND OF THE POSSIBLE BELGIAN EVACUATION AND EMPHASIZED THAT THE POTENTIAL DANGER OF SUCH AN OPERATION WOULD ONLY INCREASE WITH PUBLICITY.

4. IN THIS LIGHT, ERNEMANN WAS UNWILLING TO CONSIDER ANY ACTION HERE WHICH WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF THE EVACUATION. HE STRESSED THAT IT WOULD BE PREMATURE TO DISCUSS A LETTER TO THE SECURITY
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COUNCIL PRESIDENT WITH THE ZAIRIAN MISSION, SINCE NO DECISION HAD YET BEEN TAKEN TO PROCEED WITH AN ACTUAL EVACUATION. HE REJECTED THE IDEA OF INFORMING OTHERS BECAUSE OF HIS CONCERN OVER FURTHER PUBLICITY. HE DID EXPRESS WILLINGNESS TO CONSIDER A LETTER WHEN AND IF THE DECISION TO EVACUATE IS MADE (PRESUMABLY DURING THE DAY FRIDAY, MAY 19, BRUSSELS TIME). ERNEMANN SAID THAT HE HAD TRIED TO CONTACT THE ZAIRIAN MISSION EARLIER IN THE DAY BUT THAT THE ZAIRIAN AMBASSADOR AND HIS DEPUTY ARE BOTH OUT OF TOWN. AMBASSADOR REPORTEDLY IS SCHEDULED TO RETURN FROM HAVANA MAY 19.

5. BRITISH AMBASSADOR RICHARD QUICKLY AGREED. HE SAW NO PURPOSE IN DISCUSSING PROPOSED LETTER WITH THE ZAIRIANS IN ADVANCE OF EVACUATION. HE SUGGESTED THAT REVELATION OF ZAIRE'S REQUEST FOR OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE IN THE EVACUATION WOULD HARM ZAIRE'S PUBLIC STANDING AND, THEREFORE, SHOULD NOT BE MADE UNLESS LATER REQUIRED BY OUR OWN SELF-DEFENSE. ZAIRIANS MIGHT WELL REFUSE TO SIGN SUCH A LETTER IN ANY CASE.

6. WE EXPRESSED SURPRISE AT BELGIAN STATEMENT THAT
DECISION TO EVACUATE HAD NOT YET BEEN TAKEN.
WE PERSISTED IN EXPRESSING OUR CONCERN THAT THE PUBLIC
KNOW THAT AN EVACUATION, SHOULD ONE OCCUR, HAD BEEN

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PAGE 01 USUN N 02025 02 OF 02 190040Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----024222 190042Z /62

O 190037Z MAY 78
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AMEMBASSY KINSHASA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 02 OF 02 USUN NEW YORK 02025

EXDIS

ORCHESTRATED AT ZAIRE'S REQUEST. NEVERTHELESS, WE GOT
NOWHERE. THE BELGIANS (APPARENTLY
REFLECTING FIRM INSTRUCTIONS FROM HOME)
AND BRITISH WERE ADAMANTLY OPPOSED TO EVEN INFORMAL
ACTION HERE. THE FRENCH WERE LESS VOCAL, BUT LEPRETTE
EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT THE COMPLEXITY AND DANGER OF AN
EVACUATION EFFORT AND FULLY SUPPORTED THE BELGIAN
AND BRITISH POSITIONS. THE BELGIANS AGREED TO
RECONVENE THE GROUP TO RE-EXAMINE THE US SUGGESTION
ONCE A GO/NO-GO DECISION IS MADE. LEONARD

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